

Administrator's Update for 2/15/12
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Yesterday Cheney Bros., Inc. closed on the land acquisition that will become their newest distribution center. The new center could bring as many as 380 jobs to the area plus associated businesses that will further boost local economy. We are all so pleased that this outstanding company has decided to anchor its next distribution center in Charlotte County. As the project moves through design, permitting and construction, Charlotte County will dedicate staff to this high priority project to focus on Cheney Brothers experiencing a smooth process and they move to completion. Welcome Cheney Brothers and we wish you great success.

Illegal dumping

Our solid waste environmental crimes deputy has made another arrest for the illegal dumping of landscaping debris and tires. Since Aug. 2011 the solid waste environmental crimes deputy has made seven arrests and, along with the solid waste code enforcement officer, has investigated numerous illegal dumping reports. These officers receive approximately five to fifteen calls a day of reports of illegally-dumped piles and on average locate two to three debris piles a day during their area surveillance visits. The officers locate the debris and make arrangements to have it removed either by contacting our public works maintenance and operations division or by signing out inmates from the Charlotte County Correctional Facility to perform a cleanup. If the officers locate the person or persons who illegally dump but cannot make an arrest, they will have them clean it.

Government Academy

Applications are being accepted for the next Charlotte County Government Academy, a unique opportunity to learn about the departments under the Board of County Commissioners. Government Academy consists of workshops at various county building locations, with presentations by staff. The five consecutive workshops will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Wednesdays starting March 14. Applications are available in the County Administration Center, libraries, or online at www.CharlotteCountyFL.com. The application deadline is Feb. 24. For more information, call Katie Ranson at 941.743.1386.

Tourist revenues up

Our tourist development department reports that tax revenues for the first quarter of the fiscal year (Oct., Nov., Dec.) indicate a 16 percent increase compared to the same time period last year. December alone was up 26.1 percent over the previous year. Other Florida tourism destinations also saw an increase in tourist development tax revenues for December. Sarasota County was up 8.4 percent while Lee County saw an 18 percent increase. Possible factors for the local increase include an improving economy, new lodging inventory, marketing efforts and excellent editorial coverage in regional and national print and electronic publications, which raises awareness of our destination.

Sky/Warn training

Our Charlotte County emergency management office has scheduled a Sky/Warn training class in partnership with Sarasota County. Conducted by the national weather service warning and coordination meteorologist from Ruskin, Florida, the class will be primarily attended by amateur radio operators that

are part of our RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service) program. This class is a requirement of our recertification as a storm-ready community by the national weather service.

Office space available

Space has become available for lease at the Family Services Center on Gibraltar Drive in Port Charlotte as a result of an after school program being cancelled and due to the relocation and opening of the Human Services Department on Loveland Boulevard. Non-profit agencies interested in leasing the available office spaces can contact Emily Lewis at 941-833-6502.

Library aid

Our libraries report that they have received funding by the "State Aid to Libraries" grant for \$80,314 this year. The funding amount last year was \$76,085 and the increase is welcomed. The funding goes into the library materials budget and will also help fund new materials for our Englewood library expansion project. Our Charlotte County library system is quickly approaching one million circulations per year so this funding is critical.